

TALK TO GRADUATING CLASS
EAST SIDE HIGH SCHOOL
JUNE 17, 1964

W. D. CHAMBERS - NEW JERSEY BELL TELEPHONE
COMPANY

Mr. Ackerman
Platform Guests
Parents and Friends
Members of the Graduating Class

At the outset I must tell you what a great honor it is for me to appear before you this evening. First of all, it is always an honor to participate in such an important occasion as a high school commencement. Secondly, this date is one day after the 16th anniversary of my own graduation from East Side on June 16, 1948. I thank you for this double honor.

As I approached the lectern I would imagine that some of you took a deep breath and said, "well here comes the long-winded, boring address every graduating class must suffer." Please relax.

Having been in your place, I know that you are here to get your diploma or see someone receive a diploma and not to hear speeches. I am also wise enough to know that a speaker must be brief and to the point if he hopes to win the appreciation of his audience. I want your appreciation, so let me get on with it.

The theme of my talk is "So I Graduated ----- What Next?"

WHAT DOES TONIGHT MEAN?

This occasion is certainly a significant one for everyone here. For the graduates it marks the end of what four years ago might have seemed like a long hard journey. Here's hoping that it was not too rough a journey for most of you. The courses you took and the grades you received as freshmen now probably seem like a dim memory. Even the fun you had as freshmen would probably now be called kid-stuff. Yet this was only four short years ago.

For parents tonight is probably another addition to the many memories of your son's or daughter's quick development. Graduation from high school might also mean the first giant step toward their independence. I would imagine that most of them already feel big enough and bold enough to take on the whole world.

As the program says, this occasion is a commencement ----- a beginning. It is fitting that this exercise should be called a commencement, for it is really the beginning of a new way of life for you, the high school graduate.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PAST

As you begin this new life the many things you have done to prepare yourself for it become ever so important. This preparation not only includes academic education but also the many valuable fringe benefits which come with a good education - initiative, ambition, character and dignity

It is not always the courses and grades which prepare you for life, for these are only measurements of progress at a certain time. In fact these results are very short-lived. If some two days ago Mr. Ackerman said that every senior must pass an examination on the material you had in freshman English in order to receive a diploma, I would dare say that this class would be drastically smaller. The important point, however, is the fact that you have had the initiative and drive to successfully absorb and adjust to this experience of education.

At the same time it must be clearly understood that your diploma or degree in the case of those going on to higher education, is not necessarily a ticket to success, fame or wealth. What happens next depends on you.

THE FUTURE

Earlier I mentioned the importance of personal initiative and drive.

In your experiences at East Side you have been well aware of this. It took extra drive and energy to get the best grades; it took extra drive and energy to win athletic championships; it took something extra just to be where you are tonight. This same extra effort is needed as you leave, no matter where you go, no matter what you do. Whether it be college, military service, the general labor market or even marriage, success depends on you.

It is your performance that will be the standard for your future success.

While employers are vitally interested in your scholastic record, what you do when on the job is real proof of your ability. Telling your boss what good marks you made in math, shop, typing or steno practice, or how many touchdowns you scored or homeruns you hit will not be enough. He wants to know, can you do the job well. This applies in all areas of life.

Being prepared is a big step in the right direction, finding the right job, the groove in which you fit best, is still another important step. Here each person must know his own capabilities and limitations and be able to match himself with the job opportunity at hand. The door of opportunity is there just waiting to be opened by the best qualified person.

While what happens next is directly dependent upon you, the graduate, you will still need much support in the form of interest and encouragement from others. Parents, relatives and friends will immediately recognize this as the support they have been giving through the years. This must never cease.

If you have the feeling that what I have said are the same things Mr. Ackerman teachers, guidance counselors, clergymen, parents and others have said over the years I plead guilty.

This should show how really urgent the subject of you and your future is today. What I have merely tried to do, as a fellow alumnus, is share with you some of my own thoughts and experiences.

In closing I extend all of my personal best wishes for a bright and successful future. Whatever you do, wherever you go, here's hoping you will always bring favor and pride on yourself, your family and the glory of East Side High.